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## MR. MOODY AND THE COLOR QUESTION IN THE SOUTH.

By the Rev. Francis J. Grimké,  
Pastor of the Laura Street Presbyterian  
Church, Jacksonville, Fla.

The Savannah Morning News of March 7th says:

Mr. Moody, the evangelist, appears to be man of excellent common-sense. The world knows that he is a preacher of more than ordinary power. His success in many fields of labor has been wonderful. Wherever he goes he receives a warm welcome, and the results of his efforts are always visible.

"That he has plenty of common-sense is shown by his treatment of the race question since he has been in the South. Efforts were made in a number of Southern cities to induce him to make no distinction between the white and black races at his meetings. The extremists, the cranks, and those who delight in strife said to him: 'Are not the colored people as much in need of the Gospel as the white people? Can you afford to have it said that you shut the colored people out of your meetings? When you say that you want everybody to come and hear you, why don't you make it clear that you want the colored people also, by inviting their preachers to seats on the platform with the preachers of the white congregations? Why don't you tell the colored people that you are as anxious that they shall be benefited by your preaching as you are that the white people should be benefited, and that you will be glad to have them take any seats that they may find vacant? These, and similar questions were pressed upon the evangelist, and in some localities they were pressed with considerable persistence.

"To all questions of this character, however, he answered that it was not his business to attempt to settle the race issue. He did not attempt anything of that kind at the North, and he did not see why he should at the South. He was well aware that this issue had been -



discussed for a long time, and he did not have sufficient confidence in himself to believe that he could settle it in a few days, when years of constant agitation had failed to do so. He, therefore, in effect, said: 'No, I will not touch this race issue. Let the local committee deal with it, so far as my meetings are concerned, as they may think best. They know more about it than I do, and doubtless will avoid the mistakes that I would be liable to make.'

That the attitude of Mr. Moody, as set forth in the above extract, had the effect of winning over to him the Southern whites, and thereby increasing the cordiality of his reception among them, there can be no doubt. The man who practically said to them: "Your treatment of the Negro, in excluding him from your churches, from cars and steamboats, etc. is perfectly right," would, of course, be made to feel more at home among them than if he had said: "This is all wrong, and cannot be tolerated as far as my meetings are concerned."

That there is a deep and widespread prejudice in the South on the part of white people against people of color is not to be wondered at in view of all the circumstances of the case. It is the natural outgrowth of slavery. That it is an evil, however, and an evil that ought to be removed, and that must ultimately disappear, is equally clear. American caste prejudice cannot long survive under equal opportunities for all alike in the race of life. The colored people must and will outgrow their present condition of poverty and ignorance. There is already abundant evidence of progress, and when these barriers are removed, as they surely will be, the days of caste will be numbered. But while this process of growth and development is going on, to what treatment is the Negro entitled at the hands of the Christian Church? Is it necessary for him to wait until he has outgrown the conditions which slavery has entailed upon him before he is entitled to be treated as a man and a brother, or is he, despite his present condition,



entitled to such treatment? The former of these views, unfortunately is the one which is most widely prevalent today. The time has not yet come, it is thought, for Christian principles to have full play, so far as he is concerned. The fact that he has been oppressed for two hundred years, that he has been robbed and despoiled of his most sacred rights, that he is weak and poor and ignorant and in disfavor, renders it inexpedient to extend to him even the commonest Christian courtesies. By and by, when the feeling against him has subsided, and he has risen out of his present unfortunate condition--that is, when it can be done without offending public opinion--it will be time enough to recognize his manhood, and extend to him the right hand of fellowship. That this is all wrong, and I may say even wicked--as seen in its evil effects in fostering an unholy prejudice, which is attended with untold hardships to a whole race, in ways innumerable--is evident.

The present attitude of the Church toward the Negro finds ~~no~~ no sanction in the Word of God. Anti-Christian in character, it should find no countenance in the Christian Church. Anti-Christian in character, it is the duty of the Church to seek in every possible way its abatement; not, as too often, <sup>has</sup> been the case, to palliate, or excuse, or condone, or justify this evil, but frankly to recognize its true character, and to address itself courageously and in the fear of God to its removal. This work will fall largely upon the ministers of the Gospel. It is just here, however, that the Church has been, and still is, woefully deficient. The great majority of the men who fill the pulpits in the South--and this is largely the case also in the North--not only are silent on this subject, but studiously avoid any approach to it. The men who fill our pulpits in this Southern land--and many of them, I am ashamed to say, are from the North--are almost to a man completely under the influ-



ence of this Southern prejudice. Some of them are as bitter in their hatred of the Negro as it is possible to be, and even glory in their shame, as if it were a virtue to hate their black brother. Others, it is true, feel more kindly, but are too cowardly to avow their convictions. They are mortally afraid of offending their parishioners, of losing caste, of being asked to leave. Indifference, cowardice, unfaithfulness are the glaring defects of the pulpit on this subject.

The ministers, who ought to be examples to the flock, are, in the great majority of cases, most resolute in their opposition to anything that looks like recognition. From all of their gatherings, from ministerial associations, colored ministers are most rigidly excluded. In the city of Jacksonville, at the conference which took into consideration the coming of Mr. Moody to the city, not one colored minister was present. The whole colored clergy was ignored, and a meeting appointed for their people at the hour of one of their regular services, without consultation with them. When colored ministers are treated with such discourtesy by white ministers, when the most sacred principles of the holy religion which they profess to represent are thus ruthlessly trampled under foot by them, is it surprising that their people follow in their footsteps, in their treatment of the masses of the colored people? Is it surprising that colored people in the churches to which such men minister are either given to understand that they are not wanted at all, or when they venture in occasionally are shown to the galleries or special seats known as "nigger seats"? I cannot help thinking that much of the present feeling in the Church against the Negro is due to ministerial unfaithfulness and cowardice. And it does seem to me that the time has come for this cowardice and unfaithfulness to come to an end. And now let us turn to Mr. Moody. His attitude as set forth



in the above extract, is contained in the following words:

"I will not touch this race issue. Let the local committees deal with it, so far as my meetings are concerned, as they may think best."

Mr. Moody is content to leave the treatment of the Negro, so far as his meetings are concerned, entirely to local committees, notwithstanding he knew that there was a widespread prejudice in the South against the Negro; notwithstanding he knew that <sup>that</sup> prejudice was anti-Christian in character; notwithstanding he knew that these local committees were composed entirely of white men who were largely under the influence of this anti-Christian race prejudice. He knew beforehand, therefore, just what treatment would be accorded to the Negro; that his meetings would be made caste meetings. His leaving it to the local committees is tantamount, therefore, to an indorsement of their action.

This position of Mr. Moody is the more culpable when we remember all the circumstances of the case. In the first place, this discrimination against the Negro was not at all necessary to the success of his meetings. So great is his reputation as an evangelist, that his appearance would have secured crowds of willing listeners anywhere. There would not have been the slightest difficulty in securing a mixed audience of both races. No amount of blackness and ignorance would have been sufficient to have kept the white people away from these meetings, as is evident from the fact that even at the special meeting for colored people in this city (there was only one to which they were admitted, out of the eight meetings held) it was impossible to keep the whites away, although it was announced beforehand that they would not be admitted.

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Start Mr. Moody knew, further, that by this arrangement the colored people would be deprived of attending the great majority of those



meetings. Again, he knew that in taking this position he was pandering to an unholy prejudice--the direct effect of which would be to harden men in their sins. He also knew something of the inconveniences and the inhuman treatment to which colored people are subjected in consequence of this prejudice. If he had kept his eyes and ears open, if he had read the papers, and kept himself informed as to what was going on about him, he could not have been ignorant of the fact that the insults that are heaped upon the Negro, the brutal treatment to which he is subjected, and the obstacles that are thrown in the way of his progress on every side, all grow out of this feeling of caste. Mr. Moody also knew, from the conspicuous position which he occupied in the public eye, that his attitude on this subject would be specially noted, and that it would have the effect of encouraging or discouraging this caste feeling against the Negro. And yet, with all these facts clearly before him, he willfully, deliberately, took the position which he did, thereby encouraging the mean, detestable, and I may say, devilish spirit of exclusiveness and oppression, which has already brought so much wretchedness and misery upon a whole race of people, and from which have proceeded deeds which have covered with infamy our record as a Christian nation. It is impossible to contemplate this man from his lofty eminence as the most noted evangelist of modern times, and yet stooping to a thing so mean, so cowardly, so utterly opposed to the plainest teachings of the holy religion in which he professes to believe, without mingled feelings of pity and disgust. Under some circumstances it might be the duty of Christian charity to go backward and cover his shame; but in the present instance the whole affair is so aggravated, so utterly without excuse as to call only for the severest condemnation.

It may be questioned whether Mr. Moody, occupying the position that he does, as an ambassador of Christ, had a right to hide behind



a local committee and become a nonentity in the presence of this great evil. It is the duty of all Christians, and especially those who are in high and responsible positions, to bear witness to the truth, and to testify against evil. When Nehemiah saw men in Judah treading wine-presses on the Sabbath, bringing in sheaves and loading asses, if he had followed Mr. Moody's method and left the whole matter, as to the course best to be pursued, to the nobles of Judah, what a sorry figure he would have cut as God's representative to a degenerate people! There is a higher law than the opinions or judgments of local committees; and that higher law Nehemiah followed. He testified against those that sold victuals on the Sabbath day, in obedience to the law of God. So John the Baptist testified against Herod and Herodias. If he had suppressed his convictions, if he had been as discreet as Mr. Moody, he might have saved his head, and have been delightfully entertained by that incestuous pair. It is not an easy matter, I admit, to testify against evil; it is not always free from peril; and we are such cowards, we are so much more afraid of men than we are of God, so much more afraid of suffering than we are of sin. **Now** soon the craven spirit shows itself. Only a few hours' ride from one section of our country to another often has the most surprising effect. People who once thought that they were friendly to the Negro, and who were not slow to express their sympathy with him in the North, wake up suddenly, under the influence of a Southern sky, to discover that they had been laboring under a delusion, and too often "out-Herod Herod" in their expressions of contempt for the Negro. Thank God, however, there are some men who are brave enough to be true to principle regardless of personal consequences, who count not their lives dear to them.

It may be still further questioned whether Mr. Moody would have been so willing to sacrifice his manhood, by placing himself complete-



ly in the hands of local committees, if it had been on any other question. What if, instead of discriminating against the Negro, these local committees had discriminated against the poor in favor of the rich, excluding the former from their meetings; or against the ignorant in favor of the educated? Would Mr. Moody have quietly submitted to this arrangement, or excused himself from acting, on the plea that the local committees would know better how to deal with the matter than himself? There is no sane man who believes that he would have allowed himself to be bound by any such arrangement. And why? For the simple reason that it would have been un-Christian for him to have tolerated any such distinction. But is the distinction on the ground of color any less un-Christian? Is it wrong to shut poor people out, but right to shut colored people out? Is it wrong to shut ignorant people out, but right to shut colored people out? Is the Gospel of Christ for all classes and conditions, rich and poor, high and low, but not for people of all races and colors? I have dwelt upon this because it brings out still more clearly the mean, contemptible spirit of partiality against which the Word of God constantly protests. The wisdom which is from above is not only pure, but without partiality.

Besides, this seeming modesty, or distrust of his own ability to deal with this question on the part of Mr. Moody, and his deferring to local committees on the ground of their superior fitness to handle it, is so entirely without foundation as to lead to the conviction that it was only assumed. All the facts in the case were as fully before Mr. Moody as before them. He knew as well as they did of the existence of this prejudice; he knew as well as they did that this prejudice was especially strong in the South; he knew as well as they did all the principles of Christianity bearing on the subject; he knew as well as they did whether this exclusion of the Negro was



consistent or inconsistent with these principles; and he knew that in point of impartiality he was not a whit behind them; indeed, he had every reason to believe that in this one particular at least he was their superior. It was a moral certainty that in their hands it would be treated from the side of their prejudices; and yet, knowing this to be true, the question is coolly turned over to them for settlement, on the ground of their superior fitness to deal with it. But enough has already been said to set forth the true character of such conduct. Perhaps in the future Mr. Moody may learn that God is no respecter of persons; that of one blood he has made all races of men; that Christ died for all alike, and that the soul of the Negro is as precious in his sight as that of the white man.